THIS OPINION WAS NOT WRITTEN FOR PUBLICATION

The opinion in support of the decision being entered today (1) was not written for publication in a law journal and (2) is not binding precedent of the Board.

Paper No. 17

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS
AND INTERFERENCES

Ex parte RICHARD G. HYATT

Appeal No. 96-0893
Application 07/958,710[1]

HEARD: JULY 8, 1996

Before HARKCOM, Vice Chief Administrative Patent Judge, and KRASS and BARRETT, Administrative Patent Judges.

KRASS, Administrative Patent Judge.

DECISION ON APPEAL

This is a decision on appeal from the final rejection of claims 1, 3 through 6 and 9 through 11, constituting all the claims remaining in the application.

The invention is directed to an electronic input terminal and a method of providing access therethrough. More

[1] Application for patent filed October 9, 1992.

particularly, alphanumeric access codes are entered into an electronic locking mechanism for opening a locked door. The nature of the invention is best understood from a review of representative independent claim 1 reproduced as follows:

1. An electronic input terminal, comprising:

means for generating a random alphanumeric character;

display means for displaying a first generated random alphanumeric character at a first position thereon;

adjustment means for incrementing or decrementing the first generated random alphanumeric character displayed on said display means to obtain a first selected alphanumeric character displayed by said display means;

input means for entering said first selected alphanumeric character to comparing means;

said display means further including means for preventing the first selected alphanumeric character from being viewed on said display means after said first selected alphanumeric character has been entered by said input means, and for displaying at least a second random alphanumeric character generated by said generating means at a second position thereon upon entry of said first selected alphanumeric character which second random alphanumeric character can be adjusted by said adjustment means to obtain a second selected alphanumeric character which is entered to said comparing means by activation of said input means;

wherein said preventing means comprises means for displaying a blocking symbol at said first position on said display means occupied by said first selected alphanumeric character upon entry of said first selected alphanumeric character by said input means;

means for storing a valid entry code;

said comparing means for comparing the first and second entered alphanumeric characters to a valid entry code stored in said means for storing to determine if access is permitted, and outputting a signal if the entered characters match the stored valid entry code; and

access means responsive to said signal for allowing access to a user of said terminal.

The examiner relies on the following references:

Thrower	4,857,914	Aug. 15, 1989
Gartner et al. (Gartner)	4,899,562	Feb. 13, 1990
Murrer et al. (Murrer)	4,967,305	Oct. 30, 1990
Miller et al. (Miller)	5,061,923	Oct. 29, 1991

Claims 1, 3 through 6 and 9 through 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103. As evidence of obviousness, the examiner cites Miller, Murrer and Thrower with regard to claims 1, 3, 4, 9 and 10, adding Gartner to this combination with regard to claims 5 and 6.

Rather than reiterate the arguments of appellant and the examiner, reference is made to the briefs and answer for the respective details thereof.

OPINION

We have reviewed the evidence before us and conclude therefrom that the instant claimed subject matter would not have been obvious within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. 103.

With regard to independent claim 1, we agree with the examiner's analysis at pages 2-4 of the answer, as far as it goes, regarding the disclosures of Miller and Murrer and how the

teachings of these references apply to the instant claim.[2] However, it is our view that the examiner's analysis falls short of a complete analysis of the claim as a whole.

The claim recites more than merely an aggregate of elements, i.e., random character generator, display, adjustment means, input means, preventing means including a blocking symbol, etc. Rather, the claim recites very specific interrelationships between the elements which are not taught or suggested by the combination of Miller, Murrer and Thrower.

More specifically, the claim recites a "means for generating a random alphanumeric character," which is taught by Miller at lines 13-17 of the Abstract, but the claim further recites the generation of a "second random alphanumeric character ...at a second position" which, of course, is not taught or suggested by Miller since Miller only generates a random number at initiation of each sequence. While Murrer shows numbers in first and second positions, nothing therein is suggestive of randomly generating the numbers in those positions and nothing in

[2] We also note that the examiner employs Thrower for the teaching of employing alphanumeric characters, rather than just numeric characters, in an access control apparatus. However, this teaching would appear to be merely cumulative to that already suggested by Miller, at column 3, lines 4-6, viz, that the display provides an indication of "the number or other code..." The "other code" is clearly suggestive of alpha-characters.

Miller would have suggested generating random numbers in each position shown by Murrer.

Moreover, while Murrer does disclose blocking symbols as means for preventing selected characters from being viewed on the display, the claim requires the view prevention after the selected character has been entered by said input means.[3] In Murrer, the blocking x's constitute an alternative embodiment to Murrer's invention where all numbers are blocked at all times, the user entering the code numbers based on flashing LEDs indicating that the user has actually pressed a key. The blocking symbols do not appear only after a selected character has been entered by an input means as in instant claim 1.

The claim then requires that the second character is generated at a second position upon entry of the first character. So, again, the display of characters at various positions is related to the entry of characters by the input means. Similarly, the claim requires the blocking symbol to be displayed upon entry of the character by the input means.

While Miller, Murrer and Thrower show various elements of the claimed invention and suggest, in general, various features such as blocking symbols, the use of alphanumeric characters and the display of characters in different positions,

[3] Entry, as disclosed, is made by pushing inwardly on the rotatable and axially movable knob 30 in Figure 1.

there is nothing in the applied references or any combination of them which would have been suggestive of the claimed interrelationships of these elements, e.g., the display of a blocking symbol at certain positions upon entry of selected characters by the input means.

Claims 3 through 6 stand with independent claim 1 since they include all the limitations of claim 1.

With regard to independent claim 9, while this method claim is a bit broader in scope than independent claim 1, it requires the display of a different symbol in place of the adjusted character after said entering step. Thus, the display of characters is dependent on entry of an adjusted character into the terminal. This is not taught or suggested by the applied references.

With regard to independent claim 10, this claim is directed to the alternative embodiment of the instant invention, shown in Figure 2, wherein the random characters are displayed in place of each other, rather than in different positions, and a visual indication on the input terminal shows the user that the previous adjusted character has been entered.

While the examiner points to column 7, lines 42-55 of Murrer for this feature, the indicator LEDs in Murrer do not indicate a position in sequence of an entered number, as recited in instant claim 10, but rather that a key has actually been

depressed. We find no suggestion in Murrer, or either of the other applied references, of the subject matter set forth in instant claim 10.

With regard to independent claim 11, this claim recites limitations similar to those of independent claims 1 and 10 including the requirement of entry of a selected character before a subsequent random character is generated in place of the previously selected character. For the reasons supra, no teaching or suggestion of this claimed subject matter is found in any of the applied references or combination thereof.

The examiner's decision rejecting claims 1, 3 through 6 and 9 through 11 under 35 U.S.C. 103 is reversed.

REVERSED

GARY V. HARKCOM, Vice Chief)
Administrative Patent Judge)
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ERROL A. KRASS) BOARD OF PATENT
Administrative Patent Judge) APPEALS AND
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